

Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

DCS Communications Office

May 21, 2004

This Week In Central Office

Wednesday, May 19

Commissioner Miller conducted supervisory Training for the Knoxville, East and Northeast regions.

Thursday, May 20

Commissioner Miller attended the Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention and Support kick-off in Nashville.

The Week Ahead

Wednesday, May 26

Commissioner Miller will conduct supervisory training in the Hamilton, South East and Upper Cumberland regions.

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Thursday & Friday, May 26 & 27

Commissioner Miller and the DCS Core Leadership Team will attend a two-day retreat focusing on management, leadership and morale.



May is National Military Appreciation Month

Please keep in mind the sacrifices of our troops and their families and support our injured service members who are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Also, many not-for-profit groups throughout the state are asking for the following items for our troops:

- ✓ Long Distance Calling Cards
- ✓ Clothing Gift Certificates
- ✓ Food Gift Certificates
- ✓ Cards and Notes

Monday, May 31, is Memorial Day: Originally called "Decoration Day," this day of remembrance commends those who have died in service to our nation. Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, and was first observed on May 30, 1868.



Taft Youth Center Student Wins National Honors

Weekly Reader, a leader in educational publishing, has announced the winners of one of its most prestigious contests of the year. **Jeremy Johnson, a middle school student from the Taft Youth Center in Pikeville, Tenn.**, was one of three winners of the Eyewitness to History Contest for Current Events, one of 16 magazines published by *Weekly Reader*.

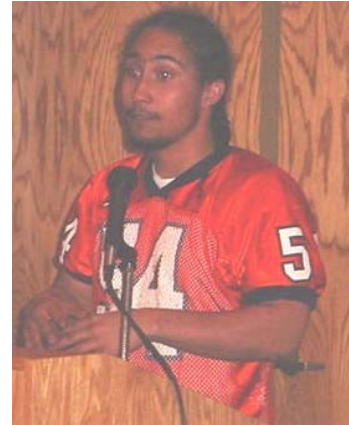
Johnson won a \$100 gift certificate to Amazon.com, and his interview about the Vietnam War was published in Current Events.

Weekly Reader has sponsored the Eyewitness to History Contest for ten years. Entrants are asked to interview an individual who lived through a historic event-such as a war, natural disaster, or other event of historical significance-and to write an essay of 1,000 words or less. The contest is designed to encourage students to think and write analytically about significant events and individuals in American history that aren't found in the pages of history books.

Hundreds of students from all over the United States submitted entries this year, with only three chosen as winners.

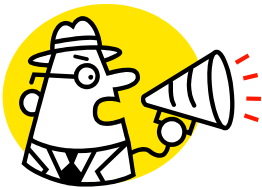
Weekly Reader editors judged the contest. The winners were selected because they demonstrated a strong understanding of American history, displayed originality in composition and analysis, and used correct spelling and proper grammar.

To read the Eyewitness to History essays, log on to www.weeklyreader.com



Taft student Jeremy Johnson accepts the *Weekly Reader* essay contest award.

Communications Update: Calling all Newsletters!



Does your region have a monthly newsletter you would like to make available on the employee intranet? Well, then, send it our way! Please email Rick.H.Mullins@state.tn.us your monthly newsletter in a word document and include your region and month in the subject line.
(Ex: Southeast Region: May Newsletter)

Do you wish your region had a newsletter? Browse the employee intranet and see how it's done! Not all regions have a newsletter ... but we can help you change that!

From the Desk of Viola Miller: Foster to Adopt

On Thursday, May 20, Servella Terry and I kicked-off a major Diligent Recruitment Initiative for the State of Tennessee and DCS staff from across the state attended. There is no more important initiative for our out-of-home care children.

We are currently experiencing about 67% of our adoptions in foster homes. We must increase that to around 85%. Why is this so very important?

If we have access to a sufficient number and quality of foster homes in which to place the majority of our children, the process of “falling in love” will kick in. We want our first placement and certainly our second to be, as often as possible, a “forever home” for our children.

This job is huge - We must:

- ◆ Close homes we are not using.
- ◆ Recruit families matched to our population.
- ◆ Chose families as foster parents because we believe that those families can become the “forever families” we want for our children.
- ◆ Be honest with potential foster parents about the children in the system.
- ◆ Match our recruitment with our need on a county by county basis
- ◆ NEVER, either directly or indirectly, lead foster parents to believe that they will adopt UNTIL the TPR is complete.
- ◆ NOT blame foster parents for our own lack of reasonable efforts.
- ◆ Encourage foster parents to develop healthy relationships with birth parents.
- ◆ Teach our foster parents about the life sustaining issues of attachment and bonding.

Most importantly...more important than any other issue...we MUST support our foster parents as partners in caring for our children. The foster parents see these

children 24/7; we need the knowledge they gain from this experience.

Our support must include:

- ◆ Returning their phone calls quickly. (No more than 24 hours ever)
- ◆ Listening and responding to their concerns.
- ◆ Involving them in ALL CFTM's, staffings and court hearings.
- ◆ Responding quickly to their needs in caring for our children.

Please...

- ◆ Close the homes you are not using and will not use.
- ◆ NEVER overload a foster home.
- ◆ Treat Foster Parents with respect and preserve their integrity.
- ◆ Remember they are now and will be in the future our number one source of adoptive homes.

We must screen new foster homes carefully remembering that they may well become our adoptive homes. We will be spending a great deal of time on selecting foster parents, nurturing foster parents and partnering with foster parents.

Remember our goal of 85% of our adoptions happening in foster homes. We will, by Oct. 1, 2004 be dually certifying as foster/adopt all new homes. We do not need foster homes that we would not consider as adoptive homes.

Please revisit the foster parents Bill of Rights. It's the law, and we need to know it and implement it. **I've said it before, and I'll say it again, foster parents are our very best resource for adoptive homes. If we will embrace this concept, recruit high quality foster homes based on the needs of each county, we can significantly improve outcomes for our children. There is no greater goal.**



It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it.

~Lena Horne

While one person hesitates because he feels inferior,
the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior.

~Henry C. Link

Something must die in order to grow - your old habits, your old self image, your old
thinking, your old life - must be weeded out for the seeds of success to grow.

~Doug Firebaugh

In a time of rapid change, standing still is the most dangerous course of action.

~Brian Tracy

The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain!

~Dolly Parton

Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention
of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved
body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used
up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming: "WOW,
what a ride!"

--Anonymous
